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## Back home from Iraq, possibilities beckon

### Future: After a nine-month stint overseas, Del. Anthony G. Brown is being courted for several prominent offices.

By Jennifer Skalka  
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It isn't as if Del. Anthony G. Brown lacks the pedigree. The Prince George's County Democrat almost never appears in print without "Harvard Law School graduate" or "House majority whip" or his limitless potential mentioned somewhere in the story.

But having just returned from a nine-month stint in Iraq, where he served as a senior consultant to the Iraqi Transitional Government's Ministry of Displacement and Migration, Brown's star is suddenly and most certainly on the rise.

His name is being floated for and he is considering a number of prominent offices -- U.S. senator, lieutenant governor, state attorney general and comptroller.

His Democratic colleagues in the General Assembly plan to toast his return with a "Welcome back from Iraq" block party over Labor Day weekend.

And yesterday, he had lunch with Montgomery County Executive Douglas M. Duncan, an undeclared gubernatorial candidate who will likely not be the last official to come seeking Brown's support.

"I know what I'd be thinking if I were him. 'I am a Harvard-educated family man with a track record in public service at all levels, and there is no limit to what I can do,' said Del. Melony Ghee Griffith, a Prince George's County Democrat.

But as Brown, 43, readjusts to life stateside, taking his two children to school and kung fu lessons and settling back into his Lanham law practice, he's coy when pressed to name the office that most strikes his fancy.

"I'm not taking anything off the table," he said.

#### Back from the war

Brown returned home in June to his wife, Pat, whom he met at Harvard Law, and children Rebecca, 10, and Jonathan, 5. He was awarded the Bronze Star for meritorious service in Iraq.

According to Nicole Moore, a spokeswoman for the National Conference of State Legislatures, 11 state lawmakers and legislative staffers have served in Iraq since the war began.

A delegate since 1999, Brown departed for Iraq in September as a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve and member of the Judge Advocate General Corps. He said he was eager to go after unsuccessfully trying to get an overseas assignment during the first Gulf War, when he was on active duty. When the call came in May 2004, Brown signed on -- even though his

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service wasn't required. He said he never thought to say no.

"That's never been my mindset," Brown said. "My mindset was if I ever got the call, that's what I've got to do. If I don't go, someone else will."

### **Full of purpose**

But Andrew Brown, the delegate's fraternal twin, said his brother is deliberate to a fault. The stint in Iraq was no accident.

"Anthony is not one to blindly jump into things," said the brother, who works in the film production industry in Los Angeles. "He does look at all the moves he makes, career-wise, even family-wise; [they] are really geared to move him and his career forward. It's no secret that his desire to go to Baghdad in a big respect was politically motivated."

Anthony Brown is a bundle of coiled energy in a striped oxford shirt and olive-colored suspenders. During an interview in his office, he speaks at length and uses sweeping gestures to punctuate his remarks.

With a boyish face and toothy grin, he could pass for half his age, but the flecks of gray in his sideburns and an undeniable poise give him away.

In Iraq, Brown lived in the Green Zone, four square miles from the front lines. He slept in a trailer and had a roommate. The dining area, laundry and barbershop were all within a five-minute walk. He bought bootleg DVDs -- he mentioned the last Star Wars movie in particular -- from Iraqi children selling them on street corners.

"I missed the freedom of movement that we sometimes take for granted in our daily lives," Brown said.

Brown, who grew up on Long Island and is one of five children, said the Iraqi elections were a highlight of his time there. And he talked about opportunities for travel around the country -- to Mosul and Kirkuk and Fallujah -- as life-expanding experiences.

Brown bobs and weaves, though, when asked how the war is going. "I'm not really competent to speak to that," he said.

Still, Brown would say that if creating a stable and self-governing Iraq is the goal, the United States is falling short in a key area. "I don't think we're doing a good job equipping the Iraqi forces," he said, noting that they are driving around in Toyota pickup trucks and without adequate protective gear.

### **Iraq's future**

While Brown once posited that it would take five years at a minimum to establish a functioning independent Iraqi government and a secure nation, he said yesterday that he's not sure that's in the cards. "I don't know how long it's going to take or whether it's even going to happen."

Now that he's home, Brown enjoys a growing collection of fans. He and Duncan ate at the Greenbelt Marriott yesterday, a tete-a-tete Duncan's people were proud to publicize. And while Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley, another likely gubernatorial candidate, said his team hasn't begun to look for a potential running mate, he had nothing but praise for Brown.

"He's a sharp guy and will be very successful in whatever he goes on to do," O'Malley said. "I think all of us should be grateful that there are people like Anthony Brown who are willing to serve our country and our armed forces."

### **'Bright future ahead'**

U.S. Rep. Albert R. Wynn, a 4th District Democrat, said Brown has a "very bright future ahead of him," but cautioned that he shouldn't give people the perception that he's jockeying for higher office too soon.

"I think he should be focusing on getting back and engaged in the work of the legislature and continuing to play a leadership role on a myriad of key issues," Wynn said.

But Brown is clearly looking forward. When asked whether Maryland's U.S. Senate race already included an ample number of perhaps more experienced Democratic candidates than he, Brown pointed to the new U.S. senator from Illinois, the self-proclaimed "skinny guy with the funny name" who emerged from a pack of eight contenders to become the Democrats' rising star.

"Tell that to Barack Obama," Brown said

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